

## The Plymouth Area Coalition for the Homeless



Committee members plan the 10th Anniversary Celebration for the Plymouth Area Coalition for the Homeless. L-r: Ed Copp, Pat Bell, Vivian Brock, Marge Telford, Sandra Sutherland, Keith Knowles, and Kathy Callahan.

Ten years ago a group of volunteers formed the Plymouth Area Coalition for the Homeless, leased an old farm house in Halifax and were in business.

In those 10 years the Coalition has moved from a Halifax farmhouse to their own building in Kingston and expanded programs to those in need, all this while facing budget cuts on the state and federal levels.

Marge Telford has been the Coalition's executive director for over 8 years and has been instrumental in securing property and expanding the programs.

Her first achievement was the construction of the Coalition's building in Kingston which houses the Pilgrim's Hope program for homeless families.

Telford stresses the homeless shelter is not what most people expect.

"The Pilgrim's Hope program is a program for families who are homeless. Very often people think of the single person who lines up every day and goes into a shelter for a night."

*POOR-OVERSEERS OF*

"The Pilgrim's Hope program serves families who are homeless in southeastern Mass. It would be a pregnant or parenting mother and her children or a man or woman and their children or just a father and their children."

Pilgrim's Hope provides assistance, self-help skills and housing search for those taken in and makes a commitment until the family can find permanent affordable housing.

This past year 2 high-profile stories were reported. One involved a family living in Myles Standish State Forest and the other involved a father and child living in woods in back of Independence Mall.

The Coalition searched out the family in the state forest after receiving a report from Jordan Hospital where the woman was taken for treatment after she was assaulted.

The second family was provided housing at Pilgrim's Hope after their plight was reported in the local paper and shelter workers sought them out.

One family has found housing, the other is still looking, but Telford says that family expects to have housing soon in the Plymouth area.

The program at Pilgrim's Hope is structured to each individual family by determining their needs and helps them with budgeting, parenting classes and whatever skills and education they need to become independent and sustain independent living.

Telford said many of those who have gone through the Pilgrim's Hope program return to volunteer in the Fair Exchange and Food Pantry programs at the Kingston shelter.